

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE ASYLUM,

ON THE EIGHTEENTH OF MARCH, 1798,

BY

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CURATE OF SAINT OLAVE'S, SOUTHWARK.

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TO THE
GUARDIANS OF THE ASYLUM

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE PRESENTED,

AND

HUMBLY RECOMMENDED TO THEIR SERIOUS, ATTENTIVE
PERUSAL,

BY THEIR OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

*St. Saviour's Church-Yard,
Southwark.*

W. L. FANCOURT.

THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF LONDON

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE CITY TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY JOHN STOW, AN EYEWITNESS OF THE SAME

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND ENLARGED

BY W. L. JACOBI

LUKE ii. 34.

BEHOLD THIS CHILD IS SET FOR THE FALL AND
RISING AGAIN OF MANY IN ISRAEL; AND FOR
A SIGN THAT SHALL BE SPOKEN AGAINST.

THIS prophecy is a metaphorical allusion to that of Isaiah, mentioned in the viiith chapter, and cited at large by St. Paul in these words: “Behold, I lay in Zion a
“ stumbling-stone, and rock of offence; and
“ whosoever believeth on him, shall not be
“ ashamed*.”

In considering the words before us, we ought to have in remembrance a proposition universally acknowledged by the most learned and pious theologists—“That all the prophecies in the New Testament relating to the kingdom of the Messiah, or, in other words, to the reception of the gospel of Christ, its effects and consequences, have a large and extensive use, not confined to any particular age, but reaching to every age of the christian church.” To prove indeed the design, meaning, and application of some of

* Rom. ix. 33.

the prophecies, much explanation, elucidation, and argument might be necessary; but of such clearness and perspicuity is the prophecy read to you for the text, that it must immediately strike the most superficial observer,—That each sentence thereof is not less interesting and important to every individual of this age, and country, than it was to God's peculiar people, to whom, as a prophetic warning and consolation, it was originally addressed. A man must be a mere sciolist in the knowledge of the kingdom of God, a mere nominal professor of the gospel of Christ, a stranger to the fashionable sentiments of the world, or to the true meaning and intentions of scripture, not to know, what “a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence,” the doctrine of Christ is to multitudes of the present age; not to see, how Christ is now held up, “as a sign to be spoken against;” in a word, not to acknowledge the parallel between the objections of the Jews to the preaching of Christ crucified, and to those which are now made by ignorant and sensual men of the present day.

It must be evident to all men, who search the scriptures, who make Christ's religion
the

the chief object of all their studies, and the ground of all their hopes; that this Child, so emphatically proclaimed aloud in the hearing of all the people assembled in the temple at Jerusalem, “as a Child set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel,” is likewise set for the fall and rising again of many in England. This same Child, whom the aged prophet with such transport of holy joy, clasped in his arms, will be to us, as well as to the Jews, according as he proves our rock of offence, or as we lean on him as our rock of salvation, “a favour of life unto life, or death unto death*.” If any further proof was necessary to demonstrate the truth of this, surely these words of our Lord would do it: “If I had not come and spoken to you, you had not had sin, but now you have no cloak for your sin†.” From this we must be convinced, that after the people of this, or any other country, have heard Christ preaching in their streets, have had the clearest evidence of the divinity of his person, the sacred nature and high importance of his office, and the perfect holiness and righteousness of his doctrine, and still

* 2 Cor. ii. 16.

† John xv. 22.

continue to withhold their assent to his divine truths, which they cannot gainsay, and their consent to live according to his holy precepts, which they cannot but approve of;—we must be convinced, I say, that their sin is so highly aggravated, that they can plead no excuse for it: that having thus frustrated all the ends of their Lord's incarnation with respect to themselves, Christ may truly be said, “not to be born for them, but against them;”—“not to be set for their rise, but their fall;” unless indeed by timely repentance, wrought in them through the grace of God, they turn, and seek him in his holy word and ordinances, and by a pure and pious life and conversation “adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things*.” Such a blessed restoration to a right spirit and understanding, can be the only means of affording them the least hopes of partaking in the joyful completion of that part of Simeon's prophecy, which declares “Christ shall be set for their rising again;” that he shall no longer prove as an occasion of their stumbling and falling, but as the effectual means of raising them up to eternal life and happiness; that, when

* Titus ii. 10.

“ the

“ the day breaks and the shadows flee away *;” whilst those, to whom Christ has been throughout their whole lives a rock of offence, and a stumbling-stone, are setting in the western mists of eternal night, they, rising on the bright beams of the east, shall ascend together with the Sun of Righteousness, into the beatifick presence of unclouded brightness.

The nature of the prophecy being thus explained, and its application and allusion pointed out; I now proceed to call your serious attention to some plain and leading points of your holy religion; according to your ignorance or knowledge of which, your disregard or observance, so will your respective consciences bear you witness, how far a crucified Saviour has been your stumbling-stone and rock of offence; how far you have spoken against him yourselves, and held him up “ as a sign to be spoken against by others.” As your consciences, more or less, accuse or excuse you, so accordingly may you look forward with the pleasing hope of beholding Christ set for your rising to a life of glory, or with “ a fearful looking for of judgment †,” in dreadful anticipation of that

* Cant. ii. 17.

† Heb. x. 27.

agonizing fight—the beholding the Son of Man set against you in dread array, ready to pronounce that irreverfible fiat, which fhall hurl you down into an abyfs of endless mifery.

In treating, then, of the important fubjects I am about to lay before you for your confideration this day, I fhall not ftudy thofe little graces and ornaments of compofition, which rather captivate the imagination, and move the paffions, than enlighten the understanding and affect the heart. My ftudy will be to fpeak of them with gravity and ferioufnefs, fo as to open your eyes to matters which you may be ignorant of, or at leaft do not pay that due regard to, which, as Chriftians, you are in duty to God, in love to Chrift, and in charity to your own fouls, bound to do; to awaken you to a fenfe of the danger you incur, whilft you remain fo unconcerned about them; and, through the divine bleffing, to animate you with an ardent defire to become better acquainted with the nature of your high calling, and to prefs forward with faith and patience towards the mark of the glorious prize, that is fet before you*.

* Philip. iii. 14.

And

And here I conjure you, by Christ, let not your consciences say, whilst I am preaching of these matters, as Felix did to St. Paul: "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*." That season once offered and deferred, may never again return, and you may find yourselves ranked with Felix at the day of judgment. Whilst, then, the day of salvation lasts, before "the night cometh, when no man can work." "Give diligence to add to your faith, knowledge." You profess to be believers, take heed that your names be not enrolled amongst those who shall be found at the last day in possession of no more than a speculative faith, who have contented themselves with giving a mere assent to the truth of the Gospel, without ever knowing the real nature, or feeling the true power thereof. This, I fear, is the perilous state of too many; ignorant of the first rudiments and principles of religion, they become an easy prey to the devourers of Christ's flock. That you, my Christian friends, may not fall into such a snare, and become so easy a prey to deceivers, who would make a gain of

* Acts xxiv. 25.

your souls ; that you may discern between the true doctrine of Christ, and the cunning devices of men ; I would fain, through the blessing of God, impress your mind with some of the first and most important lessons of your religion ;—The real knowledge and right notions of which seem, in these latter days, to be dying away apace, and to be considered, as obsolete maxims, not worthy of the attention of an enlightened and philosophical Christian of the eighteenth century ; but, for all that, are the main props and pillars of the Christian church, which, if once thrown down, the true lamp of vital religion is extinguished. Our old and venerable edifices of true worship and devotion will speedily moulder into dust ; whilst on their site, mosques will arise, better adapted to the religion of Mahomet, than that of Christ : which, like whited sepulchres, may appear, as to their externals, fair and pleasing, delightful to the carnal man, but full of deceitful and corrupt doctrine within, disgusting to the spiritual, who turning away from them with shame and grief, cries out, “ O Lord, how long shall deceivers flourish, and lead thy people astray ? How long shall your
holy

holy religion be suffered to be made “a traffick and a merchandize?” How long shall the souls of men be bought and sold in this city *? How long shall more than six score thousand souls in this great Nineveh be kept in ignorance, not capable of discerning, as to their spiritual life, “between their right hand and their left †?” This is, and must be the wretched state of thousands, as long as their Ministers “blink the question;” and declare not openly and boldly the evident truths of the Gospel ‡.

As I trust, then, Christians, there is not within me a false spirit of prophecy to be deceived myself, and to deceive you, I will boldly speak those truths, which I conceive as coming immediately from God, though they may offend another Ahab,—fully convinced with Micaiah, “What the Lord has spoken, that must I speak §:” and with

* Revelations xviii. 13.

† Jonah iv. 11.

‡ What that excellent prelate, Bishop Horne, observes, in respect to speaking boldly the truths of the Gospel, and asserting the rights of the church, ought ever to be engraven on the breasts of every Minister.—“He who in certain cases, gives men no offence, will for that reason give men no instruction.” In a *Visitation Charge to the Clergy of Norwich*, in 1791.

§ 1 Kings xxii. 14.

St. Peter, "That as the Lord has sent me
 " to speak, so ought I to obey him, rather
 " than man *."

Now the first great point of religion, or truth of the Gospel, that I shall insist on, as necessary for every Christian to know and acknowledge, is the divine mission of Christ's Ministers; the sacred nature of their office, their dignity, and their responsibility. If your notions and conceptions of these are low and mean, you stumble at the very threshold; for as you would not send for a physician, unless you had perfect confidence in him, as to his skill and regular authority to prescribe, so neither can you have any faith in your spiritual physician, if he cannot prove to you from whence he derives his authority to speak; if he cannot convince you, that he is versed in that spiritual wisdom, of which he himself professes to be a teacher. If your notions of his office and character, reach not above that of a creature, delegated by human authority, you will never profit under his ministry.

The second great and fundamental truth is, that as the Ministers of Christ are "am-

* Acts v. 29.

bassadors in his stead," so the doctrine they preach can only be drawn from the book of their Divine Master. The wisdom that cometh from above, can only be traced in the writings of the sacred penmen, who, whilst on earth, spoke as the spirit gave them utterance; who, when about to depart this mortal life, by the suggestion and guidance of the same spirit, wrote what they had seen and heard, and left to the world "a Book," in which is summed up all that is necessary to believe and practise. It is in this book that true wisdom is to be found, and not from the schools of Rome and Greece; not from the dull ethics of Epictetus, or much less from the vain philosophy and casuistry of modern times. Look, then, to the true nature of evangelical doctrine, and let no man deceive you with "curious arts" and vain philosophy; for remember your faith is to be built on knowledge: if your foundation, therefore, is bad, what must the superstructure be?

The third great truth I have to call to your remembrance is, that there must be a something within you, without which neither

ther God's Ministers, nor God's Word, can have any influence upon your lives and conversations. You must have such a disposition of heart as filled the breast of *Mary*, when in an humble posture she sat at the feet of our Lord, attentive to every word that fell from his divine lips ; such a willing and ready spirit as shone forth in the child *Samuel*, when he cried out, " Speak, Lord, " thy servant heareth ;" such a spirit of obedience as characterized the Children of Israel, when they said to *Joshua*, exhorting them to put away strange Gods, " The Lord " our God will we serve, and his voice will " we obey ;" such an humble and teachable spirit must you have to profit under the ministry of God's Word, or make any proficiency in the school of divine wisdom :—The whole disposing whereof is of the Lord ; it is the gift of his free grace to all, who ask for it faithfully through Jesus Christ.

Now I know, that multitudes of nominal Christians understand none of these things ; and what is worse, " like Gallio, care for none of these things*." Perhaps there may be such

* Acts xviii. 17.

a description of persons in this chapel*; for I am well aware, that it is with this congregation
as

* That there are some, (I pray God but few) of Gal-
lio's cast amongst the Subscribers to the Asylum, appears
woefully evident from the gross insult, and opprobrious
treatment, which one of our most venerable and learned
prelates experienced at a special general court of that
Charity—In the faithful and conscientious discharge of
his high office—in standing forward as an open censurer
of vice—in pleading the injured cause of female or-
phans—he was wantonly accused of intolerance, of want
of charity, and at last, had these words thrown in his
teeth, “He that is without sin amongst you, let him cast
“a stone at him.”—This is the apex of all iniquity;
this is the chapter of Satan's pillar; the *chef-d'œuvre* of
all his art. Behold men calling themselves Christians;
holding themselves up as guardians of female innocence,
under a mask of compassion and humanity, with the
words of our blessed Lord in their mouths; behold them,
I say, tearing up the very roots of true Evangelical Cha-
rity, and trampling under foot the most ancient and sacred
rights of the Christian Church. Such an instance of sacri-
legious insult, and unwarrantable usage towards “one of
the rulers of their people,” must rouse the indignation of
every good Christian. It is no more, however, than
what we have been taught to expect in these latter times,
in the hour of the power of darkness.

What a primitive Bishop declared, as the manœu-
vre of Satan in his days, we, to our sorrow, have
witnessed in this age (a). The adversary of Christ,

(a) Epistle 59. Cornelio—St. Cyprian. *Anno Domini*, 240.—Epistle 66.
Florentio—St. Cyprian.

and

as with all others, the good and the bad often mix together in the house of God, drawn indeed by far different motives, and

and enemy of his Church, for this end strikes at the Bishop, or Ruler of the Church, with all his malice, that the Governor being taken away, he might ravage the more cruelly and violently upon the shipwreck of the Church. For, says he, "Schisms and heresies must arise, and have arisen, while the Bishop, who is one, and Governor of the Church, by a proud presumption is despised; and that man, who is honoured as worthy by God, is accounted unworthy by man."

What another pious Bishop says, has, in the instance before us, been fully verified by these modern despisers of dignities: "Some, indeed, call him Bishop, yet do all things without him; these seem not to me to have a good conscience, but rather to be hypocrites and scorn-ers (a)."

With true penitential tears, it is said, and God forbid any Christian should doubt it, does the afflicted author of all the late evil at the Asylum bewail his fall, and repent in dust and ashes. May his tears of penitence be like those of holy David, that the Blood of his Saviour may wash out his sin, though it be red as scarlet! and, as such contrition, we are assured, will procure a total oblivion of his crime in the sight of God, so ought it to be had no longer in remembrance before man.

Go, ye, who have insulted one of the worthiest PRELATES of your Church, and follow the example of the penitent: "Repent of this your wickedness, and pray God, if the thoughts of your hearts, and the words of your lips, may be forgiven you." Acts viii. 22.

(b) Epistle to the Magnesians—St. Ignatius.—*Anno Domini* 71.

influenced by widely opposite sentiments and dispositions. Some assemble in this house, like the devout Cornelius, to offer up their prayers to God, accompanied with their alms to these little Orphans of the Charity ; and, like faithful Gaius, to do all, as unto God, and not unto men. The prayers and alms of such children of our church will ascend up to the Lord, as a memorial, rendered acceptable at the Throne of Grace by the angel of the “covenant, to whom much incense is given to offer it up with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne*.” May such Saints be the supporters of this house of charity ! They in no wise shall lose their reward † ; for the angels of these little ones, who see the face of their Father, which is in Heaven, shall ascend and descend to ward off from them every evil, and to bless them with every good. Nor shall this house itself be deprived of God’s blessing, whose mercy and superintendence protecteth the orphan, the fatherless, and the widow.

But, I fear, there are others, who frequent and contribute to this house, whose

* Revel. viii. 3.

† St. Matthew, xviii. 10.

alms by no means tend to bring down a blessing upon it; to whose services God returns this answer—"Who hath required this at your hands*?" For as a tree is known by its fruit, so from what is discernible in their conduct, even in this sanctuary, we may not unjustly conclude, that their elemosynary gifts spring not from that source of divine charity, whose lamp is fed continually by that oil which descendeth from above—"the influence of the Holy Spirit." Whilst a third party, composed of idlers and loungers, and of silly women led astray by their own vain imaginations and deceitful hearts, flock together as they would to the theatre, to see and to be seen; to spend an idle hour, that on this day may hang heavy on their hands. Perhaps too, enticed to hear some pretty flowery tale, some sweet sounding words of pathetic eloquence; or upon such occasions, as the present, to act the part of critics, and to pass their judgment upon the performance of a new preacher. Oh! my God, to what a pitch of insignificance is your holy religion reduced! To what a level are your Ministers brought

* Isaiah, i. 12.

down!

down ! Pardon, Christians, the warmth of mine expressions. But really concerning these matters my heart has long felt, what this day my tongue is bold enough to utter.

It must not be concealed, that the nature of the ministerial office, its sacred dignity, and awful responsibility, are sadly prostituted and degraded in this city and country. Few of the people conceive aright of the Divine Mission of Christ's Ministers, and too many of our order give them too much occasion to think irreverently and flightingly of it. But form not your opinion of the Ministry from a Judas and a Julian; traitors and apostates will spring up in each successive period of the Church—your Lord foretold this : " Offences," says he, " will arise, " and cause many to fall away from the " truth, but woe to them through whom " offences do come *." Offences already have abundantly sprung up in our church, the purest as to its doctrine and devotional service in Christendom ; offences have caused schism amongst her children ; have debased the religion of her Lord ; have made it sub-

* Matthew xviii. 7.

servient to trade*, to self-interest, and every sinister and bad purpose. But woe to all by whom these offences have been brought in, whether by her priests or her people. I believe that both are implicated in this heavy charge; and that our church now complains with her Divine Master, "mine own familiar friends have lift up their heel against me †." "My watchmen are blind, are ignorant; they are shepherds which cannot understand; they all look to their own ways, every one for his gain, from his quarter; my people love to be deceived, and they shall have it so ‡." "They shall have false prophets, speaking peace to

* Grey's Debates.—This observation was made in the House of Commons in the year 1667, by Sir John Berkenhead, concerning the state of religion in Holland at that time. To such a pitch of pride and irreligion had that mercenary people arrived, that their magistrates and burgomasters actually dismissed a minister for preaching against their Sunday markets; and severely reprimanded another for inveighing against plays, by which they collected 40*l.* for one of their charitable institutions; wittingly observing, that if he (the minister,) could find out a project for raising 42*l.* he might preach, what doctrine he pleased."

† Psal. lxi. 9.

‡ Isaiah i. 56.

them.

“ them, when there is no peace *.” When the ministerial office is thus vilified ; when the people have such low and mean conceptions of the ambassadors of Christ ; when the ambassadors themselves thus betray the cause of their Master, and hold up their King “ as a sign to be spoken against,” as a mark to be shot at, as a butt for the malice of wicked men ; when a new fangled religion is set up, and the people choose their delegates to preach to them that kind of doctrine which suits best with their depraved notions, which gratifies their self-love, puffs up their self-vanity, tickles “ their itching ears †,” and leaves them in the undisturbed enjoyment of every object of sense—it augurs no good to a country : there wants not the aid of prophecy to foretel, that Christ is set for the fall of such a church and nation. Similar notions of religion and of the ministerial office, which have for years past crept in amongst us, were the forerunners as well as cause of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the once celebrated churches in Asia, and last of all, of that which our eyes have witnessed, “ the Gallican church.” For it is a well-known

* Ezekiel xiii. 10.

† 2 Tim. iv. 3.

fact, that the French priests and people of rank and fashion, upon landing in this country, reciprocally accused each other of being instrumental in bringing down God's vengeance upon their devoted land*. The times may come, when a similar recrimination may take place amongst us : when either in captivity or exile, the priests of our church may alledge, as the cause of all their evil,—“ the voluptuousness, sensuality, and pride of the rich and great ;” whilst on the other hand, the latter may justly retort, “ had you declared unto us the truths of the Gospel ; had we seen their efficacy in your lives and conversations ; we had not fallen into such snares and sin ; we had not been, together with you, overwhelmed in these mighty waters of ruin and desolation.” Here let St. Paul's advice have its due weight with you : “ what has been written aforehand, has been written for our admonition ; what has happened aforetime, has happened for our

* This anecdote was related to the author by a French emigrant clergyman ; adding, that the sanguinary revolution of France was in a great measure owing to the supineness and negligence of the clergy in their several stations, and, consequently, the general unconcern of all ranks of people for religion.

“ ensamples, upon whom the ends of the
 “ world are come *.”

Really, if you are wise, this caution of the Apostle will not be lost upon you. You will consider the sufferings of the Gallican church and nation as admonitions; you will make use of them as ensamples, and thus save yourselves from the wrath to come. To do this effectually, you must view the church of Christ through a different medium, than what you have perhaps been wont to do; your ideas and notions concerning spiritual things must be changed; you must conceive aright concerning the ministers of Christ; for to them it is, that you are to look up for instruction in spiritual wisdom, and consolation in the hour of affliction: Christ sends you to his church; but what benefit can you receive from thence, if you look not upon his servants, who tend at the altar, as vested with his dignity, and speaking with his power? And if you use your own judgment, grounded on the word of God, and guided by his Spirit, you may always distinguish the hireling, who works for his pay, from the true shepherd, who, though living by the altar, serves

* I Cor. x. 11.

it faithfully, and really “ feeds the flock of “ Christ.” It behoves you, then, to be duly impressed with a right notion of the nature and dignity of the divine mission of Christ’s ministers. The primitive Christians loved and revered their teachers, as sent by Christ, to call them out of a state of sin to a state of grace ; to turn them “ from the power of “ Satan unto God* ;” to lead them on through knowledge to faith, through faith to glory. They had reason, indeed, to love them, so have you : and you would be more convinced of this, did you but consider, as they did, in what relation you stand in respect to your ministers ;—how that in their hands is the cup of salvation ;—that they are the guardians of the oracles of God ;—that, upon the forfeiture of their own souls, they are to expound them in the hearing of the people, and to enjoin them upon the consciences of men ;—that they are the very persons, whom Christ has promised to be with, to the end of the world† ; and that they are the very persons, who will witness for or against you at the day of judgment. Could such notions as these, through the grace of

* Acts xxvi. 18.

† Matt. xxviii. 20.

God, take root in your minds, our preaching would not, as it so often is, be in vain. Your scriptural knowledge would be enlarged; your hearts would be more spiritual; your faith would be strengthened, and your spirits, amidst all afflictions, whether publick or private, and especially at the hour of death, would find in the cup of cordial, presented by a faithful minister, a refreshment, a consolation, “a peace that passeth all understanding*.” Whether or no such sentiments of love and reverence for your ministers ought to be alive in your breasts, judge ye. But whatever your opinions may be concerning them, they cannot help; of this, however, they must be well convinced, that upon their fidelity and knowledge, upon their courage and zeal in the discharge of their duty, much depends the salvation of this country. Christ is set for our fall or for our rise, according as his church flourishes or declines amongst us; according as his ministers prove faithful, and draw to him “a peculiar people, zealous of good works†.”

Since, then, our temporal and eternal interests, under the influence of God's Holy

* Phil. iv. 7.

† Tit. ii. 14.

Spirit, depend, on the one hand, upon the prudent and zealous endeavours of the ministers, to make their people truly wise and good, virtuous and happy; and, on the other hand, such a reciprocity of sentiment in the minds of their people as not to frustrate their kind intentions, but to receive with joy and “ meekness the engrafted word, which is “ able to save their souls* :” since this is the only ground, upon which we can rest any hope that God will be “ our refuge, until “ these calamities be overpast † ;” until our nation be delivered from that army of desolation, that now encompasses its coasts; and our church from that bondage of corruption, that now depresses and enslaves its members on earth: since, upon the divine authority of scripture, we are solemnly assured, that, whenever the visitations of Almighty God scourge a land, “ judgement will begin “ at the house of the Lord ‡ :” since we have witnessed this awful truth most terribly fulfilled upon the Gallican church, “ not less than 24,000 of her priests having been massacred, and many thousands now wandering in exile upon the face of the earth :” since all

* James i. 21. † Psalm lvii. 1. ‡ 1 Pet. iv. 17.

this knowledge, admonition, and warning, cannot be otherwise than now brought home to our respective consciences;—what sort of people must we be, not immediately to see, and openly confess, how mightily it behoves all the ministers of our church to look to their doctrine, and their conversation, lest they deceive their flock, and cause the people to fall away from the Holy One of Israel: and how greatly, at the same time, it behoves the people to say, as the children of Israel did to Joshua, “God forbid we should “forfake the Lord to serve other gods*.” With the deepest conviction of these awful truths upon my mind, and the high importance of my calling, it has been mine endeavour, and shall be, as far as the discharge of this day’s duty enables me, to prove myself a “true witness, who delivereth souls, and “not a deceitful one, who speaketh lies†;” so that I may commend myself to the consciences of you all, and together with my brethren, on another day, “answer for my “ministry to the God of the spirits of all “flesh‡.”

* Josh. xxvi. 16.
xvi. 27.

† Prov. xiv. 25.

‡ Numb.

I now

I now proceed to the second great point of religion proposed to be considered, “the true nature of evangelical doctrine.”

St. Paul told the Athenians, when he found them worshipping “an unknown God*,” that they were too superstitious, and worshipped they knew not what. This may be said to multitudes in this country, with a little variation—“Ye are too careless, ye worship ye know not how, or what. Ye are ignorant of the nature of your God, and of the service he requires at your hands. Ye are like the disciples at Ephesus†, ye “know not whether there be any Holy Ghost,” or what the Holy Ghost is; what are its properties in respect to you; how it should enlighten your minds with “all truth‡;” how it should purify them from every evil thought; how it should sanctify them to every good word and work; how it should embolden you to do, undergo, and forego every thing for Christ; how it should stir you up “to adorn “the doctrine of God our Saviour in all “things||,” to “run the race that is set before you§,” and to “gain the prize of your

* Acts xvii. 22, 23.
xvi. 13.

† Acts xix. 1, 2.
|| Tit. ii. 10.

‡ John
§ Heb. xii. 1.

“high

“ high calling *.” Ye are too ignorant of that God-man, who became incarnate, that ye might become immortal; who, having no sin of his own, without guile and without spot, took your sins upon him, and bare your reproaches on the tree; fulfilled, to every jot and tittle, the moral law †;” and thus became, as Jeremiah says, “ The Lord our “ Righteousness ‡.” Ye know not how to || sprinkle the blood of this paschal Lamb by faith upon your hearts, with the humility of sinners, “ snatched as fire-brands out of the “ fire §.” Ye know not the complexum of our Jehovah Elohim, the Father, Son, and Spirit; the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier; all co-operating in the glorious work of Redemption, which, when finished, shall be made manifest before the whole world of men and angels, and before the light of the sun. Now let me tell you, that if ye worship, look up to, or depend on, any other God, than that which I have here represented, “ the Blessed Trinity,” ye worship an unknown God; ye have only been dreaming

* Philip. iii. 14.
xxiii. 6.

† Matt. v. 18.
|| Heb. xi. 28.

‡ Jer.
§ Amos iv. 11.

of Christ's religion, but have not known it*. From this dream, from this danger, that holy Church, of which you profess to be members, is both willing and able to set you free, if you will but hearken to her counsel and advice. Behold! she spreads open before you the Book of Life, the oracles of God: she points out to you the true doctrine of salvation: she calls upon you most importunately and passionately to seek and adhere to that true religion, described and enforced by her apostles and evangelists; "to walk humbly before your God †"—to "depart from all iniquity ‡"—to look up with an eye of faith and love to a crucified Saviour; whose blood shall wash out every spot that defiles your corrupt nature; whose righteousness, if you believe on him, and tread in the paths of his holiness, shall, as St. Paul says, be imputed to you, and make you righteous and acceptable in the sight of God. In addition to this, your holy Church would have you daily call to your remembrance (as she daily prays that you may be fully sensible)

* Lactantius observes de Platone—"Somniaverat Deum, non cognoverat."—Lib. V. c. xv.

† Mic. vi. 18.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

how by God's free grace you have been called—how by Christ's free love you are redeemed. Above all things, she solemnly enjoins you to conceive aright the nature of the trifold offices of the Blessed Trinity, as they respect your election, sanctification, and redemption. Lessen but the power of, disparage but the office of one of the persons in this adorable united essence, and you no longer remain under the covenant of grace.

This, my christian friends, is an epitome of that form of sound words, which your holy Church would have you hold fast, as necessary to salvation; this is the sum and substance of that religion, which your Lord brought into the world; — the very seed-plot of all your faith, of all your hope, and of all your righteousness; upon which your Church has founded all her articles, her homilies, and her liturgy. But some of you, perhaps, may here exclaim, Does not this savour of enthusiasm?—" Now, do not think so wickedly, my brethren;" do not imagine that I stand, as it were, upon the tripod of the Pythian god, inflated with a false spirit, pouring forth nothing but noise and empty sound. Indeed I have uttered nothing but the truth:

if

if I have spoken more than the truth, convince me; if less, rebuke me: God forbid that I should add unto those things which are written in the book of God, or that I should take away from any part thereof, lest he should take away my part out of the book of life, out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in his book *.

Important and infallible are the declarations of Christ in the Scripture; according to them, as our rule, we must now walk; and according to them, at the last day, we shall be judged*. Infinite, then, is the danger of adding to, taking from, perverting, or denying these sacred records. You will pardon, therefore, Christ's Ministers, if in speaking the truths of his Gospel, they should be so bold as to say things distasteful to flesh and blood. Pardon them, also, if they display, in an humble degree, some of that zeal which Christ manifested when he drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple; fulfilling that prophecy of the Psalmist;—
 “ The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”
 “ The ground of all the enmity of the rich
 “ and great at Jerusalem, was the zeal of
 “ Christ for the reformation and purification

* Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

“ of the Church, which he so forcibly displayed in his reproofs and exhortations ;
 “ Christ’s Ministers of the present day meet
 “ with the same usage if they shew any
 “ zeal for the house of their God *.” But
 this is not a time, when ministers should be cold and pusillanimous in the service of their God ; it is not a time for ministers to act the part of Gehazi, to step out of the way of their sacred calling to salute any man by the way. There is an awful passage in Ezekiel, which, I trust, we shall all recollect : “ Woe
 “ to the foolish prophets, because they have
 “ seduced my people, saying peace when
 “ there was no peace. And one built up a
 “ wall, and, lo ! others daubed it with untem-
 “ pered mortar ; say unto them, that daubed
 “ it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall :
 “ thus saith the Lord God, I will even rend
 “ it with a stormy wind in my fury, and there
 “ shall be an overflowing shower in mine
 “ anger, and great hail-stones in my fury
 “ to consume it †.” Whatever structure a minister may raise, if he build it upon any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ, his work shall be

* Bishop Horne’s Comment on the Psalms.

† Ezekiel xiii. 10, 11, 12, 13.

burned, and he himself shall suffer loss*. Terrible is their ruin, who refuse to build on that foundation, of which Jesus Christ is the corner stone; and great their loss, who attempt to mingle their own fancies with the doctrine of Christ. Let, then, those ministers look to their work, who have deprived religion of her simple, plain, and unadorned mantle of native truth, and enshrined her in a meretricious garb of divers colours; well suited, indeed, to dazzle and deceive the senses; well adapted to lead the mind astray, to take up with the shadow instead of the substance of religion—this is that untempered mortar which God will wash away in his overflowing shower of anger; and those who use it, are described by St. Peter, as having forsaken the right way; as having gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bofor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness†.” These are wells without water—clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. God deliver our Church from such temporizing, false, and vain conceited prophets, lest she, together with them,

* 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13. † 2 Pet. ii. 15, 17.

be consumed in the ruins of their deceitful buildings.

Thus far have I endeavoured to bring home to your consciences, two of the most important truths of your religion, upon which the whole fabrick of it stands, as upon a sure and unshaken basis;—the true dignity and responsibility of the ministerial office, as set forth in sacred Scripture; and the genuine doctrine of the Gospel, as laid down by Christ and his apostles. Perhaps you may think I have spoken too bold a language for one who is candidate for your favour—granted: and did I now stand for any secular office, I might flatter you, importune you, and act the part of an humble dependent; but far different is the office I now crave—my credentials, which I deliver to you as authority for my being admitted into this pulpit, are of divine mission, entrusted to me by those whose only peculiar right, inheritance, and prerogative it is to grant me these powers; nor, by the grace of God, will I fully them by any unbecoming arts of worldly complaisance. And here I cannot refrain from making a few observations on the nature and consequences of elec-

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tions in general for clerical appointments. From what I myself have observed and noticed in these matters, I am fully convinced no greater sin attaches itself to our church and nation than the mode and method of conducting these elections*. Almighty God is most grossly insulted; Christ is held up in a most signal manner, as a sign to be spoken against by every despiser of our holy things—by every enemy of our church; for the character of Christ's Ministers is stained; their persons rendered contemptible—their office a nullity; and vital religion exchanged for mere form and outward ceremony. What difference, Christians, is there in these days between the mode and practices made use of for a secular and spiritual office? They are now upon the same footing, and considered

* A true Christian will shudder when he hears that it is not uncommon in elections for lectureships in this metropolis to have boozing committees, and every species of bribery practised; threats made use of to deter persons from voting according to their inclination and consciences; and even the sacred temples of God converted into places of cabal; nay! literally turned into a den of thieves! "Let it not be told in Gath and Ascalon, lest the enemies of our holy faith laugh us to scorn."

upon the same level. Well would it be for the laity, and especially for ministers themselves, to consider what God says, by his prophet Ezekiel, concerning these matters: "Her priests," says the prophet, speaking of the Jewish Church, "have violated my laws, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the clean and unclean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them*." The charge comes home to us, and I shall here be bold enough to say in this matter, "as with the people so with the priest." Oft times the poverty, or covetousness, of the latter, induces them to do that which they ought to blush at—which they cannot answer for at Christ's Judgment seat; whilst the pride and insolence of the former puff them up "to lord it over God's heritage, to place themselves in the chair of Moses and Aaron†." What St. James says, in another matter, I may say in this: "Brethren, these things ought not to be ‡." They ought not

* Ezekiel xxii. 26.

† 1 Pet. v. 3.

‡ James iii. 19.

to be allowed amongst a people calling themselves the disciples of Christ: it is unbecoming and culpable to use undue means and low artifices to procure a secular appointment; but to obtain a spiritual one, it is not only unbecoming and culpable, but sacrilegious and wicked. It is, in a manner, bartering away the gifts of the Holy Spirit. What was once observed by a philosopher*, concerning architecture, may here be justly applied to religion: "I have been taught, says he, by my tutors, that a man who undertakes other persons concerns, ought rather to be solicited than to solicit." If a man, whose employment it was to erect perishable buildings had such an high opinion of the dignity and utility of his profession, surely something of the like spirit ought to stir up those whose occupation it is to build houses that perish not. But here, I beseech you, do not mistake me: for although I am standing forth an advocate for the unsullied dignity of the ministerial office; yet, by no means, would I abridge any man of that due respect which his rank and situation in life demands: It is my duty as well as my inclination; and I have, and as long as I have any being, shall

* Vitruvius Præfat. 50. 6.

continue to teach and inculcate this precept of St. Paul, "Honour to whom honour is due; fear to whom fear; tribute to whom tribute*." But at the same time, is there no honour to the ministers of Christ? Is there no fear of affronting or insulting them? Is there no tribute of respect? I say not of money; for with St. Paul, I could wish we were enabled to wave our right "of reaping your carnal things for our spiritual †," that the Gospel of Christ might in no wise be hindered; but that is impossible: therefore all that I plead for is, that while we are ready to ask with becoming humility, and to receive with thankfulness, you will not oblige us to do that which debases the dignity of our office, and renders all our preaching vain. I trust that through the blessing of God, what I have, and shall deliver this day, will not be in vain. If you possess those inherent qualifications necessary to predispose your hearts to receive the word of God in truth, the doctrine of Christ will not be a rock of offence to you, nor a stumbling stone, but rather it will prove the means of building you up in all knowledge

* Rom. xiii. 17.

† 1 Cor. ix. 11,

and faith, though it should come from the lips of the meanest preacher.

This leads me to the last thing proposed, “the temper of your hearts,” as a previous qualification necessary to enable you to profit under the ministry of God’s word, or to receive any instruction from the study of the sacred Scriptures. Have you a reverential fear, a supreme love and veneration for God’s holy name, word, and ordinances? A desire after him as your highest good? Do you know how to value and estimate your Saviour’s sufferings? Have you a true faith in, and love for his person? Do you “feel in your bosom any desire to serve God in spirit and in truth?” Your hearts must be predisposed by the spirit of God, or you will never understand what you hear or what you read. In vain do you come to this place to find what you ought to have before you come, what you ought to bring along with you, a true spirit, and a right understanding in the ways of godliness. Indeed, without a spiritual heart, no truth will be acceptable; no argument will be convincing;—all that Christ’s ministers can say will seem to you as idle talking, and as the dreams of madmen. You must possess, therefore, what you pray
for

for in the Litany ; a heart “to hear meekly the word of God, and to receive it with pure affection, so as to bring forth the fruits of the spirit.” For it is with the spiritual, as with the natural appetite ; a vitiated palate loaths sound and wholesome food ; a depraved and corrupt heart rejects and nauseates sound and wholesome doctrine. What is said by a heathen poet, concerning the folly and punishment of an earth-born monarch, may not improperly be here introduced ; for it contains not less a lesson of instructive admonition, than displays the beauty of poetical fancy. The poet represents his king as translated to heaven, and seated at the table of the heathen gods ; when nauseating the ambrosial food placed before him, he is instantly cast down into the regions below, as an unworthy guest, incapable of relishing heavenly food *. Such is the real condi-

* ————— εἰ δὲ δὴ τιν' ἀν-
δρα θνατὸν, οὐλύμπῃ σκοποὶ ἐλιμα-
σαν, ἣν Τανταλος ἔηλος.—ἀλλὰ γὰρ κα-
ταπέψαι μέγαν' ὀλβον ἐκ ἐδυ-
νασθῆ· κορῶ δ' ἔλεν
Ἄλαν ὑπέροπλον,
Τὰν οἱ πάσις ὑπερκρέμα-
σε, καρτερὸν ἀνὴρ λίθον, &c.

Olymp. I. Epode 2d.—Pindar.

tion, and will be the inevitable punishment of all Christians, who having been offered a seat at the table of their Lord, cannot relish the heavenly feast; that bread of eternal life, which, if they had an appetite to partake of, they would never hunger again; and that cup of salvation, which if they could but drink of, they would never thirst*.”

Our Saviour told his apostles, before his ascension, that there were many things which they could not bear yet, as their thoughts were too earthly and sensual, but that they should be able to comprehend and relish all things, that were spiritual and belonged to his kingdom. Accordingly we see that when the holy spirit was shed abroad in their hearts, they immediately perceived the force of divine truths, and relished as it were the stronger food of revelation. So will it be with you, when the spirit of Christ rules and reigns in your hearts, “For as long as
“ you are after the flesh you will mind the
“ things of the flesh, but when you are after
“ the spirit, the things of the spirit†.” At present, I fear, some of you will not relish what I have said; if it be so, my concern is greater for you than myself—I lose but your

* John xvi. 20.

† Romans viii. 5.

approbation—you lose that of God's. For what I have delivered this day, I have the sanction of a good conscience; I have the sanction of one of the most pious and learned of the fathers, who says, speaking of the ministry: "It is sufficient consolation for our labours, and far more than equivalent than all, if we may have a testimony in our consciences, that we compose and regulate our sermons in such a manner as may be approved of by God, in whose name we speak*." And above all, I have the sanction of St. Paul for not preaching with wisdom of words, which always renders the cross of Christ of none effect. For he who preaches "in excellency of speech†," preaches himself, and not Christ; To the unlearned, he speaks in an unknown tongue; To the learned, he conveys no spiritual reproof or instruction; for in the display of his literature, and in the loftiness of his expressions, the substance of his doctrine is lost, and the truths of his religion are frittered away. Happy would it be if St. Paul's caution to Timothy was deeply impressed

* *Ικανή παραμυθία των πονων, και παντων μειζων, οταν αυτω συνεισηναι δυναται προς Αρεσκειαν τε Θεο συνιθεις και ευθυμιζων την διδανκαλιαν— Chrysost. de Sacerd. lib. 5, § 7.*

† 1 Cor. ii. 1.

upon the minds of the ministers of God in all ages: "Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee*."

There is a day fast approaching, when every minister of Jesus Christ will be called upon to give an account of his stewardship; and great will be their reward, whose works shall stand the test of fire, and who, through the grace of God, shall have been found to have done all in their power, both by sound doctrine, godly exhortation, and advice, pious example and pattern, "to present every one of their flock perfect in Christ Jesus†." For we may justly conclude, that as the "twelve apostles are to set on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,‡" so each faithful minister of the Gentile world, will be called on to testify for or against those to whom he has been sent to preach the Gospel; according as they have received his record, according as they have endured his sound doctrine, and have brought forth fruits correspondent thereto§." Then shall all foolish, weak, and wicked persons, who have cavilled at the divine

* 1 Tim. iv. 16.

† Col. i. 28.

‡ Matt. xix. 28.

§ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

mission of Christ's ministers; who have looked upon them, "either as creatures of the state, "or delegates of the people*," fully be convinced of their real origin, and the awful dignity of their office; then shall they see their Divine Master making good the promise he made them at his departure, "Whose "soever sins ye remit, they are remitted "unto them; and whose soever sins ye "retain, they are retained†:" then will be clearly demonstrated, in the sight of men and angels, the true nature of that power granted unto St. Peter, "Whatsoever thou "shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on "earth, shall be loosed in heaven‡." Then will be the day "when wisdom shall be justified of all her children§."—A Judas and a Julian, together with all the followers and imitators of their treachery, covetousness, and apostacy, shall "go to their own place||;"

* Well has a most able and pious Divine of our Church described the true dignity and origin of the sacred Ministry, in a Sermon preached at Stoke-Newington, Nov. 26, 1797, pages 7, 8, 9.—Dr. GASKIN.

† John xx. 23.

‡ Matt. xvi. 19.

§ Luke vii. 35.

|| Acts i. 25.

whilst

whilst the followers and imitators of the blessed apostles shall enter into the joy of their Lord ; and all the censures they have passed on the scandalous and impenitent, and all the absolutions they have pronounced upon true penitents, shall be ratified in heaven, and confirmed in the last judgment.

Whilst, then, the long-suffering, goodness, and forbearance of God endureth, receive with meekness and gladness of heart the record of those faithful ministers, whom God has sent in this your generation to bear witness of his beloved Son, and to invite you, with all tenderness and importunity, to take refuge under his covenant, and be saved ; then ye will not be ashamed to confront them before the judgment-seat of God, but rather will look forward with joyful anticipation to that day, when you shall hear them bearing testimony of the faith, and love, and zeal you displayed, whilst on earth, in the cause of your Divine Lord and Master. Remember, then, as you now believe and walk in the Lord Jesus, so will it be seen in the last day, “ whether Christ has been born for you “ or against you,” whether he has been “ set “ for your rise or fall.”

In

In committing you to God, I pray most fervently, that his eternal Spirit may so “ perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you *,” that your good works may so shine forth to the glory of God on earth, that even in this life, in this present hour of the “ power of “ darkness,” you may find a shelter and a covert from the storm and tempest. But should it be ordered otherwise by the wise Disposer of all events; should it seem good unto him that the soundness, the steadfastness, and the patience of your faith should be tried and proved by temporal afflictions—may you find, what is of a far greater moment, a safe refuge and a sure hiding-place in the day of the great water-floods, when finners are calling “ to the mountains and rocks to fall on “ them, and hide them from the face of him “ that sitteth on the throne, and from the “ wrath of the Lamb †.” My prayer, then, is for you, and for all to whom the word of the Lord is come, that your faith and their’s may be found so glorious and honourable;—that when all the prophecies have been fulfilled;—that when antichrist, the beast, and the false prophet, have been vanquished and

* 1 Pet. v. 10.

† Rev. vi. 16.

destroyed,

destroyed, and all those who have “received
 “ their mark, and worshipped their image, cast
 “ alive into a lake of fire, burning with brim-
 “ stone;”—that, when the remnant of Israel
 have been converted, and the fulness of the
 Gentiles come in;—that, when the Son of
 Man, the Lord of life, beholding the whole
 work of redemption, in all its parts, framed,
 fitted, and completed, shall say unto his al-
 mighty Father, “It is finished*”;—that, when
 the trumpet shall sound, and summon all
 people, kindred, and languages, both quick
 and dead, before the awful tribunal of uni-
 versal justice;—that, when the lower regions
 of the world are wrapt in flames, and the
 heavens are resounding with incessant halle-
 lujahs—You, and all to whom the gospel of
 Christ has been revealed, may ascend to-
 gether into the new and holy Jerusalem,
 “singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.”
 Amen, Amen.

* John xix. 30.



FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 20, line 3, for *being*, read *having been*.

Page 41, note, line 2, for *συνεισθῆναι*, read *συνειδῆναι*.

4477 aad. 58.